

Americans of all political parties and Americans who don't even bother voting are all facing skyrocketing pharmacy bills. There are concrete actions we can take right now to lower the cost of prescription drugs.

Senator FRANKEN and I led 18 of our colleagues in outlining 5 of them in a letter to the President-elect in December, including putting an end to abusive price gouging, requiring more transparency from drug companies, boosting competition and innovation in the market, and allowing the Secretary of Health and Human Services to negotiate better prices for seniors. That is what we do with the Veterans' Administration. The VA, on behalf of 7 million veterans, negotiates directly with the drug companies to get a significantly better price for the cost of drugs—saves taxpayers, saves veterans. Medicare should do the same thing.

Senator KLOBUCHAR and I worked with several colleagues to reintroduce the Medicare Prescription Drug Price Negotiation Act. Negotiating better prices for seniors will save significant taxpayer dollars.

Instead of focusing on the priorities that the vast majority of Americans agree on, Congress and President-Elect Trump are working to throw 30 million Americans and some 900,000 Ohioans off their health insurance with no plans to replace it. It is reckless and dangerous. It will cause premiums to skyrocket. It will cause costs to go up for everyone. Do you know what it does? It gives a \$30 billion tax break to drugs companies and tens of billions of dollars in tax cuts to the richest Americans.

On the one hand, Congress will not do anything about drug prices because the pharmaceutical industry, frankly, gave too much money to far too many of my colleagues. On the other hand, this same Congress is going to strip away health care and consumer protections to seniors on Medicare and people of all

ages and at the same time give a tax break to the drug companies. We must fight against these attempts to decrease coverage and increase costs for working families.

Whether you support the Affordable Care Act or not, we all agree you can't ask people to change horses midstream without giving them a second horse.

Last week, I spoke with one of my constituents, Kathy, who wrote to my office last November with the heart-breaking story of her husband Lee. He is fighting stage IV cancer. Before 2010, insurance companies denied Kathy and her family the family coverage she needed because her husband's cancer was a preexisting condition. Thankfully, the Affordable Care Act stopped insurance companies from abusive practices like this. It allowed Kathy's family to buy health insurance through the marketplace, helping them afford the care he needs to fight this devastating disease. Still, like so many Ohio families, Kathy continues to struggle to afford the prescription medicines she and her husband need. She fears what will happen when a family like hers is simply kicked off their insurance.

Imagine 900,000 Ohioans with insurance and, like that—because of partisan politics here, because so many of my colleagues ran for President, in some cases, or ran for the Senate or ran for the House by saying they are going to get rid of the Affordable Care Act, and they are going to get rid of it and not replace it for a couple of years maybe.

Governor Kasich, Republican Governor in my State—also in the Presidential race with my friend in the Presiding Officer's chair—has said to the Senate and House, to Ohio's Republican Members: Don't cancel the Affordable Care Act. Don't throw people off insurance unless you are going to replace it with something right now

that will take care of those people; 700,000 people on Medicaid expansion, another 200,000 people, 26-year-olds, on their parents' plan, people on the exchanges, people getting insurance in other ways.

When I was talking to Kathy the other day, she was choked up talking about the stress and heartache dealing with a loved one with cancer, how she can't even bear the thought of adding more insurance worries on top of that. I was speaking to a hospital administrator today at one of Ohio's great hospitals. He said he thinks what this Republican Congress is going to do in the Affordable Care Act is morally reprehensible. He said: How do I explain to people right in the middle of their treatment that we can't do it anymore? Because we will not have the resources if the Affordable Care Act is repealed and the insurance is canceled and the Medicaid expansion is gone and hospitals can't take care of everybody like they are pretty much now. How do I explain to somebody right in the middle of cancer treatment, right in the middle of another kind of long-term or short-term illness that their insurance has been cut off?

Instead of kicking people off their insurance with no plan to replace it and handing billions of dollars in tax breaks to the drug companies, let us make our first priority lowering drug costs for the people whom we say we are serving.

I yield the floor.

ADJOURNMENT UNTIL TOMORROW

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate stands adjourned until 12 noon tomorrow.

Thereupon, the Senate, at 6:30 p.m., adjourned until Wednesday, January 11, 2017, at 12 noon.